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THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

OF

WOMEN'S PREACHING :

STATED AND EXAMINED.

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BY Z. TAFT.

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"I intreat thee also, true yoke-fellow, help those *women* which laboured with *me* in the Gospel, (which laboured) with *Clement* also, and (which laboured) with other my *fellow-labourers*, whose names are in the Book of Life." ..... *Philippians*, iv. 3.

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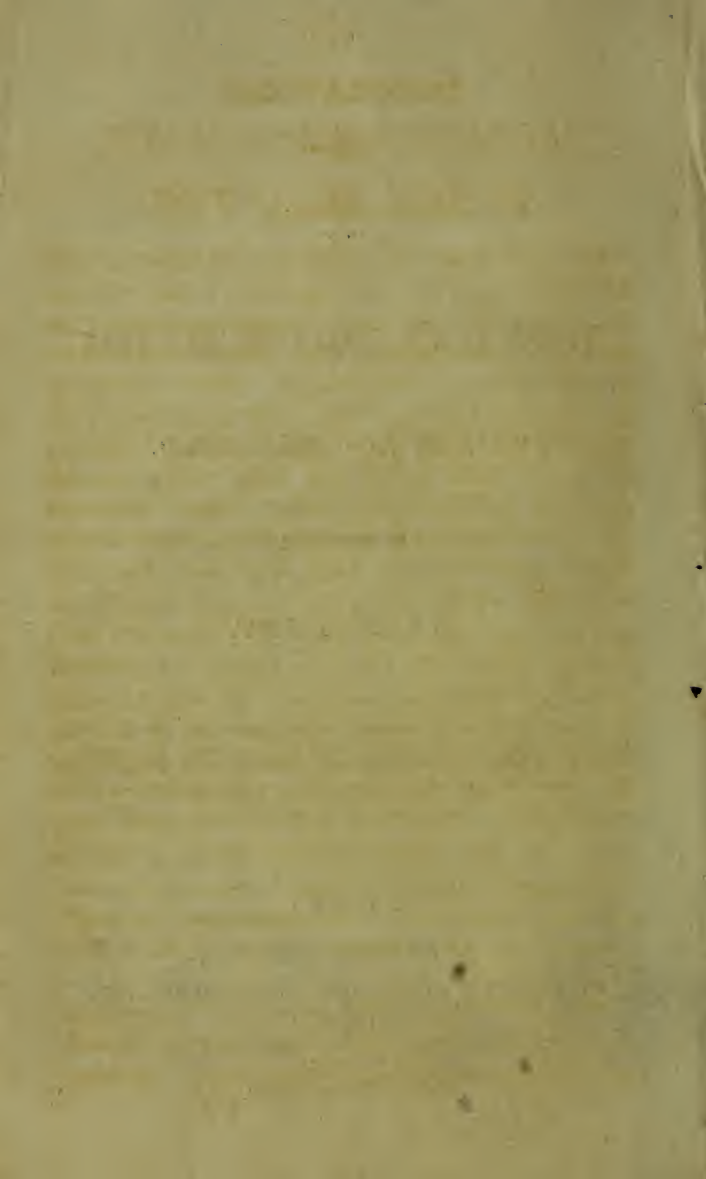
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## DEDICATION.

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### To Mrs. Mary Taft.

IT is now some time since the substance of the following pages was put together ; it was written chiefly for the comfort and encouragement of an eminently pious female, who thought it her duty to call sinners to repentance. Had something of this kind been put into your hand when you first entered upon your public work, it would, no doubt, have saved you from many painful anxieties, and distressing fears. Indeed, such was your unwillingness to enter upon that work which God required at your hand, and such the condescension of the Almighty, it might literally be said that you was *thrust out*. You have not forgotten, neither will you ever forget, “ whilst the power of recollection remains,” the Spirit saying to you, (with as much clearness as it did to Philip, when it commanded him to join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian nobleman) go to Todmorden. That you was not deceived, was evident by the effects produced there, as well as at Epstonstal, and Underbank : nor can you forget the application of those Scriptures, Jer. i. 17. —Isaiah, xli. 18.—Micah, iv. 13.—Zech. ii. 8.—1 Cor. i. 27. 28.

Many and singular have been the interpositions of divine providence and grace in your behalf, since that day of small and feeble things. Nothing

of all that God hath promised you hath failed. That the great Head of the Church has called you to prophesy in his name, you have had a more convincing proof than if an angel from heaven had been sent to assure you of the fact.

A multitude of *seals* have been given to you, and not a *few* in this place, "when you was here 22 years ago;" some of which remain to this day, but many have fallen asleep; and of the 115 persons now under your care, some no doubt will one day rise up to call you blessed. Your life of public labour is nearly over, and yet I trust it will still be said of you, as it was of another of your sex, "*that she did what she could.*" The encouragement you have had in your work from many eminent *ministers* of the Gospel, must be to you a source of high gratification. What Messrs. Pawson, Mather, Blackburn, Fenwick, Bramwell, Bradburn, Crook, Shaw, &c. &c., thought of your call, and the manner in which it was fulfilled, their letters do abundantly testify. That you may be long *preserved, directed, and comforted*, by almighty power, infinite wisdom, and boundless love—that your useful life may be crowned with a triumphant end, is the desire and prayer of yours—in endless love,

THE AUTHOR.

Whitby, Jan. 1820.

THE  
*Scripture Doctrine, &c.*



**L**ET the case be fairly stated. “Whether *Women* ministered in holy things in the primitive church when invited, or only when under the immediate influence of the spirit: whether they did this veiled or unveiled: whether they did this to their own sex only, or to mixt companies of men and women: whether there were many of these women or only a few, I am not about to contend.” The argument is, *that God did in the primitive church, and does to this day, occasionally call, qualify, and commission his handmaids, or daughters, to prophecy (that is to preach) in his name.*

1 Cor. xi. 5. “*But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered,*” &c. The apostle has joined praying and prophesying together; and as praying in a public assembly (for of such he was treating) is universally allowed to be a part, and indeed a very principal part of the ministerial office; and women did exercise this part of the ministerial function in being the mouth of the people to God. Here we have a presumptive proof, that prophesying means preaching; and, I think, a demonstration, that the speaking in the church, which the apostle reproves in women, must be wholly confined to asking questions, (whispering or chattering); otherwise it would be a prohibition against their praying, as well as preaching. For how could women pray in public, if it was a shame for them to speak in the church, in the sense wherein it is frequently un-

derstood. The apostle when he uses the word, "prophecy," precisely fixes its meaning, 1 Cor. xiv. 3. 5. "*He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort.*" Ver. 4. "*He that prophesieth, edifieth the church.*" Ver. 31. "*For ye may also prophesy, one by one, (that is, all who were qualified for, and called to the ministry) that all may learn, and all may be comforted.*" All may learn from those who prophesied; and women did prophesy; therefore women were teachers, by whom the church was exhorted, edified, and comforted.

In this common acceptation, we frequently find the word *prophecy* in the Old and New Testament. Thus in Nehemiah, vi. 7. it is said, "*Thou hast appointed prophets to preach.*" Hence prophets were preachers, and to prophesy is to preach. Gen. xx. 7. Where the Lord saith of Abraham to Abimelech, "*He is a prophet, and will pray for thee.*" Here it seems to signify a man well acquainted with the supreme Being, capable of teaching others in divine things, and especially a man of prayer. Exod. vii. 1. 2. "*Aaron, thy brother shall be thy prophet; that is, shall speak unto Pharaoh.*" Acts, xv. 32. "*Judas and Silas, being prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words.*" Luke, ii. 38. "*Anna, the prophetess, coming into the temple, gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of him (Christ) to all them who looked for redemption in Israel.*" Luke i. 67. "*Zacharias prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath visited and redeemed his people.*" Our blessed Lord stiles John the Baptist *a prophet*, Luke vii. 26; and Zacharias, the father of John, speaking of him by the Spirit of the Lord, calls him *a prophet of the Highest*, Luke i. 76.; *i. e.* a teacher commissioned by the Lord himself, to instruct the inhabitants of Judea in the things which related to the manifestation of the Messiah, and his kingdom; also 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

In most of these places, prophesying has no other meaning than preaching; and among the preachers we have a female.

Besides, should it be granted, that prophesying means foretelling things to come, an insurmountable difficulty yet remains; for if it was unlawful for women, who had that gift, to speak in the church, how were they to communicate what was revealed to them?

The simple fact seems to be, that though prophesying sometimes means predicting, or foretelling future events, it means preaching in the common acceptation of the word; and whenever it is used in the former sense, it includes the *publishing* these predictions to those concerned. Hence, under the law, such persons were styled *Nabi* prophets, (from *Ba*, which signifies to come and to go) because of their coming and going between God and the people. So under the gospel dispensation, they are called prophets, (from *pro* and *phemi*, *dico*, I speak, or utter forth) because ministers are the Lord's messengers, to publish his word of reconciliation to the people. But whatever be the meaning of praying and prophesying, as it respects the *man*, it has precisely the same meaning as it respects the *woman*. Therefore some *women*, as well as some *men*, might speak to others to *edification, exhortation, and comfort*. This kind of *prophesying, or teaching*, was predicted by Joel, ii. 28, and referred to by Peter, Acts ii. 17. Had there not been such gifts bestowed on *women*, the prophecy could not have been fulfilled. The only difference marked by the apostle was, the man had his head *uncovered*, because he was the *representative* of Christ: the woman had hers *covered*, because she was placed by the order of God, in a state of subjection to the man. It was also customary amongst the Greeks and Romans: but amongst the Jews it was an express *law*, that no woman should be seen

abroad without a *veil*. This was, and is, a common custom through all the East; and none but public prostitutes go unveiled; should a woman appear in public without a veil, she would *dishonour her head, her husband*.—(Dr. Clark.) On Acts ii. 17. the Dr. says, “The word *prophecy* is not to be understood here as implying the knowledge and discovery of future events; but signifies to teach and proclaim the great truths of God, especially those which concern redemption by Jesus Christ.”

Phil. iv. 3. “*Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel,*” &c. “In the Grecian and Asiatic countries, women were kept much secluded; and it was not likely that even the apostles had much opportunity of conversing with them: it was therefore necessary that they should have some Christian *women* with them, who could have access to families, and preach Jesus to the female part of them. The apostle tells us that certain women *laboured with him in the gospel*, and were assistants to others also, who had assisted him.” (Dr. Clark.)

Rom. xvi. 1. “*I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Centhrea.*” A deaconess. They were ordained to the office by the imposition of the hands of the Bishop. *Theodoret* says, “The fame of *Phebe* was spread throughout the world, and that she was known, not only to the Greeks and Romans, but also to the Barbarians;” which implies that she had travelled much, and propagated the gospel in foreign countries.

Rom. xvi. 3. “*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus.*”

Acts xxi. 9. “*And the same man* (Philip the evangelist) *had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.*” Probably they were no more than *teachers* in the church; for we have already seen that this is frequently the meaning of the

word *prophecy*: and this is undoubtedly one thing meant by the prophecy of Joel. "If Philip's daughters might be *prophetesses*, why not teachers." (Dr. Clark.)

Acts xviii. 26. "*Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard (Apollos) they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.*" "This eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, who was even a public teacher, was not ashamed to be indebted to the instructions of a christian *woman*, in matters that not only concerned her own salvation, but also the work of the ministry in which he was engaged." (Dr. Clark.)

We have a most successful female preacher in the Samaritan woman, John iv. 39. "*Many of the Samaritans believed on him for the saying of the woman.*" This woman was the first apostle for Christ in Samaria! She went and told her fellow-citizens that the Messiah was come; and gave for proof, that he had told her the most secret things she had ever done.

Mary Magdalene, is another instance of Christ's choosing whom he pleases to bear his commission. John xx. 17. "*Jesus saith unto her,*" after his resurrection, "*touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.*" Magdalene is a new apostle, and the first who was commissioned to preach Christ risen. All her delight was to do the will of her master; and she hasted, as it were, on the wings of love, to execute her commission, by making known his resurrection to his disconsolate disciples.

If the nature of Society, its good and prosperity in which women are jointly and equally concerned with the men; (if, *in many cases*, their fitness and capacity for instructors being admitted to be *equal* to that of the other sex,) be not rea-

sons sufficient to convince the candid reader of women's teaching and preaching, because of two texts in Paul's Epistles, (1 Cor. xiv. 34, and 1 Tim. ii. 12.) let him consult the paraphrase of Locke, where he has proved to a demonstration, that the apostle, in these texts, never intended to prohibit women from praying and preaching in the church, provided they were dressed as became women professing godliness, and were qualified for the sacred office. Nor is it likely that he would, in one part of an epistle, give directions how a woman, as well as a man, should pray and prophesy in public; and presently after, in the very same epistle, forbid women, endowed with the gifts of prayer and prophecy, from speaking in the church, when according to his own explication of prophecy, it is "*speaking unto others for edification, exhortation, and comfort.*" Besides, the apostle in this epistle to the church at Corinth, says, "*Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*" Again, "*I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied.*" Here the apostle speaks to the church in general; and the word *all*, must comprehend every individual member; and since he had just before given directions about a *woman's* praying and prophesying, we conclude that his desire extended to women as well as to men. Certainly the word *all* includes both men and women, otherwise the mind of Paul, "who was made a minister of the *Spirit*," would have been more narrow than that of Moses, who was only a minister of the *Law*: for when Joshua came and told Moses that *Eldad* and *Medad* prophesied in the camp, and desired him to forbid them; Moses said unto him, "*enviest thou for my sake? would God, that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that he would put his spirit upon them.*" Now all the Lord's people must

certainly comprehend the *Miriams* and *Deborahs* in the camp, as well as the Eldads and Medads.

Rom. xvi. 12. "*Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord.*" "Two holy women, who it seems, were assistants to the apostle in his work; probably by *exhorting, visiting the sick, &c.* Persis was another woman, who it seems, excelled the preceding; for, of her it is said, she *laboured much in the Lord.* We learn from this, that christian *women*, as well as *men*, laboured in the ministry of the word. In those times of simplicity, all persons, whether men or women, who had received the knowledge of the truth, believed it to be their duty to propagate it to the utmost of their power. Many have spent much useless labour, in endeavouring to prove that these women did not *preach.* That there were some *prophetesses*, as well as *prophets*, in the christian church, we learn; and that a *woman* might *pray or prophesy*, provided she had her *head covered*, we know; and that whoever *propheied*, spoke unto others to *edification, exhortation, and comfort*, St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. xiv. 3. That no preacher can do *more*, every person must acknowledge; because, to *edify, exhort, and comfort*, are the prime ends of the gospel ministry. If *women* thus *propheied*, then *women* preached." (Dr. Clark.)

Chrysostom and Theophilact take great notice of *Junia*, mentioned in the apostles salutations. In our translation it is, Rom. xvi. 7. "*Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles.*" By the word *kinsmen*, one would take *Junia* not to have been a woman, but a man. But Chrysostom and Theophilact were both Greeks, consequently, they knew their mother tongue better than our translators, and they say it was a woman; it should therefore have been translated, "*Salute Andro-*

*nicus and Jania, my kinsfolk."* The apostle salutes other *women* who were of note among them, particularly *Tryphena* and *Tryphosa*, who laboured in the Lord; and *Persis*, who laboured *much* in the Lord. Again, if we look into Ecclesiastical History, we shall find *women* very eminent in the church, long after the days of the apostles; I say *women* who were distinguished for their piety, their usefulness, and their sufferings; witness the story of *Perpetua* and *Felicitas*, martyrs for the christian faith; which contains traits that touch the most insensible, and cannot be read without a tear. Eusebius, who speaks of *Potominia*, *Ammias* a prophetess in Philadelphia, and others, who were equally distinguished by their zeal for the love which they bore to Jesus Christ.

*Justin Martyr*, who lived till about A. D. 150, says, in his Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, "That both *women* and *men* were seen among them who had the gifts of the Spirit of God, according as Joel the prophet had foretold, by which he endeavoured to convince the Jew that the *latter days* were come; for by that expression, Manassah Ben Israel tells us, all their wise men understood the times of Messias."

Dodwell, in his Dissertations on Irenæus, says, "that the extraordinary gift of the spirit of prophecy, was given to others, besides the apostles; and that not only in the *first* and *second*, but in the *third* century, even to the time of Constantine, men of all sorts and ranks had these gifts, yea, and *women* too." Therefore we may certainly conclude, that the prophetic saying of the Psalmist, lxxviii. 11. was verified; "*The Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it.*" In the original Hebrew it is, "Great was the company of the *women publishers*, or *women evangelists*." Grotius explains Psalm lxxviii. 11. "*Dominus dabat sermonem; id est, materiam loquendi uberem, nempe ut feminarum*

*prædicantium* (victorias) *multum agmen diceret, scilicet cæquæ sequuntur.*" The Lord shall give the word, that is, plentiful matter of speaking; so that he would call those which follow the great army of preaching women, viz.: Victories, or female conquerors.

### OBJECTIONS.

*First*, 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. "*Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be in silence, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*" "Evidently is that they were to be silent, *unless* they had an extraordinary revelation to communicate made to them by the Holy Spirit, which revelations was *chiefly* predicting future events.—(Benson.) By the word *chiefly*, Mr. Benson admits that sometimes they might speak by way of *edification, exhortation, and comfort*, though only when under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit; and it will be difficult to prove that the apostles themselves preached without that extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. But I am inclined to think the silence here enjoined by the apostle, signified that the women were *not to ask questions in the church*, which is evident from a great variety of particulars, as well as from the context. "Please to read the chapter, and mark the connexion." The apostle had been treating of the gift of tongues, and of persons prophesying one after another. It is evident in these public assemblies, there were people of different nations, as on the day of Pentecost; and that one minister had the gift of one tongue, and a second of another, in the same diversity, as they had the other miraculous gifts. That they all had not a universal knowledge of all languages, is clear from the apostle Paul's

words, 1 Cor. xiv. 18, "*I speak with tongues more than you all.*" How reasonable it is then to conclude that there were a few inquisitive women in the assembly, who, not understanding what was said, but prompted by curiosity, (perhaps by a better motive) might ask questions to the interruption of the speaker and the auditory. Therefore the apostle gives this admonition; "*Let your women (that is wives) keep silence, and if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home,*" clearly shews that the prohibition was not a general one, and that it must be confined to asking questions; at least the silence here enjoined, was never intended to prohibit those pious females from instructing and comforting the Corinthian church, to whom he had before given directions respecting their adorning while thus employed; for what has women preaching to do with *asking questions; wanting information; and asking husbands at home?* However, if understood in any other sense, it has nothing to do with *single women, with widows, with learned women;* with those that understand, are prepared, and called of God to teach the things of religion: as it refers to *married women*, and those married women *only*, that are ignorant what they should say. I think the emphasis should be laid on *your women*, and on *let them ask their husbands at home*; then the meaning is plain. There were at Corinth, it appears, some married women who were frequently asking bold, impertinent questions, occasioning debates, contention, and confusion. Let such women keep silence, and ask their husbands at home, for it is a shame for such women to speak in the church.

2nd. 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12. "*Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man,*" &c. "Unless they are under an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit."—(Wesley.) "*Sine*

*garritu*, without chattering. This was a precept of the synagogue. It is not allowed, says Maimonides, for women to *whisper*, or *trifle*, because of the reverence they should have for the congregation." (Poli Synop. in loc.)

The *subjection* which is due from women to men in general, and to their husbands in particular, recommended by St. Paul, does not relate to matters appertaining to her own personal salvation, or what is her duty in order to promote the salvation of others. In matters of conscience, both of faith and practice, women as well as men stand accountable to God.

That St. Paul *allowed* women to *edify the church* by prophesying or preaching, or speaking unto others to *edification, exhortation*, and *comfort*, we have before proved.

I think the passage ought to be read thus: *I suffer not a woman to teach, by usurping authority over the man.*

Most enemies to women preaching understand from this passage, that no woman is to *teach*, and that all *teaching* by women is usurping authority over the man. But this grants too much, in as much as it involves the following difficulties:—  
 1. No woman is to keep a school. 2. No woman is to teach her children to knit, or sew, or cook, or read, or write, &c. 3. No woman is to write books, for this is one excellent method of teaching. 4. No woman is to pray in public; for praying is one method of conveying instruction upon doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion. 5. No woman is to *prophecy*, even supposing the term applies only to foretelling future events; while that knowledge lies hid in their own mind, there is no teaching: but if God commands them to prophecy aloud and they obey him, by this they *teach* to others that *knowledge* which before lay hid in their own breasts.

If it be objected to this that the *teaching* here forbid, means only that they are not to teach the *science of religion*: still all the difficulties remain, except the two first, for the things belonging to religion may be taught by the *pen* as well as by the *mouth*; on our knees as well as in any other position.

But if it be objected that the teaching here forbid, only means face to face, (but I ask, is not this taking too great liberties with the text? St. Paul does not say that this is the only kind of teaching which he forbids, but supposing it was,) then the apostle evidently contradicts himself. That he admits and encourages this kind of teaching is plain from 1 Cor. xi. 4. For in whatever sense we understand prophecy, it must of necessity, imply teaching. Again, the sense of the text, "as objected," is contradicted in Acts, xviii. 26.—*Aquila, a female, expounded* the word of God to Apollos. I defy any man to split that hair, and prove that expounding is not teaching. But all these difficulties will be removed by understanding the passage thus: "*I suffer not a woman to teach, by usurping authority over the man;*" and pray who does? I have not heard of any such usurpation in the church.

Mr. Wesley, in the former part of his life, was opposed to women preaching, but never so much an enemy to it as he was to *lay preaching*; but no sooner was he convinced that God was with them, that sinners were converted by them, than he not only ceased to forbid them, but gave them encouragement.

"In the first attempts of a Layman to preach, Mrs. Wesley heard his discourses. Mr. John Wesley was at this time absent from London, but the thing being quite new, and appearing extraordinary, he was immediately acquainted with it. He hasted up to London with a full determination to put a stop to so glaring an irregularity. He

conversed with his mother on the subject, and told her his intention. She said, "I charge you before God, take care what you do, for that man is as much called to preach the gospel as ever you were." This kept him from a hasty execution of his purpose; and it being found, upon inquiry, that good was done, the practice was suffered to continue." (Whitehead's Life of Wesley, vol. 1, page 60.)

The conversion of sinners by the preaching of any person, whether male or female, was a strong proof in Mr. Wesley's judgment, of a divine call to the great and important work; this will appear from his most excellent sermon on Mark ix. 38, 39. It was no doubt from a conviction of the success attending the efforts of his mother, Mrs. S. Wesley, to promote the spiritual advantage of the inhabitants of Epworth, that caused him to say "that *even she*, as well as her father and grandfather, her husband and three sons, *had been, in her measure a preacher of righteousness.*" The fact was this, when Mr. Wesley's father was from home, Mrs. W. used to read sermons, and pray with the people in the Vicarage-house at Epworth on the Sunday evenings, to as many as the room would contain; sometimes there were 200 present on these occasions, and much good was done.

What were Mr. Wesley's opinion of the preaching of Mrs. Johnson and Miss Sarah Mallet, may be gathered from his Journal: "At six, I preached in the Presbyterian-meeting, a large and commodious building. And I was now with the most lively Society that I have seen for many days; owing chiefly to the *good providence of God bringing sister Johnson here.* She came, indeed, in an acceptable time; for J. W. and his wife, who for many years had been pillars, had left the Society. They had one child, a son, about nineteen years old, of whom they were fond enough:

by a fall from his horse he was killed in a moment, leaving his parents inconsolable; just then she came to Lisburn, and visited them. *God opened her mouth, both in exhortation and prayer.* They saw and acknowledged his hand. She was enabled to give up her child to God; he cried out, "Surely God has sent an angel from heaven to comfort us!" Both of them joined the Society, and are more in earnest for salvation than they have been for many years." (Wesley's Works, vol. 6, page 34.

"Monday 4th, I was strongly importuned by our friends at Long Stratton, to give them a sermon there. I heard of a young woman in that country who had uncommon fits, and one that had lately preached, but I did not know that it was one and the same person. I found *her* in the very house to which I went, and talked with her at large. I was surprised: *Sarah Mallet*, two or three and twenty years old, is of the same size that Jane Cooper was, and is, I think, full as much devoted to God, and of as strong an understanding. Of the following relation which she gave me, there are numberless witnesses.—Some years since, it was strongly impressed upon her, that she ought to call sinners to repentance. This impression she vehemently resisted, believing herself quite unqualified, both by her sin and her ignorance, till it was suggested, "If you do it not willingly, you shall do it whether you will or no." She fell into a fit, and while utterly senseless, thought she was in the preaching-house at *Lowestoffe*, where she prayed and preached for nearly an hour, to a numerous congregation. She then opened her eyes, and recovered her senses. In a year or two, she had eighteen of these fits: in every one of which, she imagined herself to be preaching in one or another congregation. She then cried out, "Lord, I *will* obey thee, I *will* call sinners to repentance.

She has done so occasionally from that time; and her fits returned no more." (Wesley's Works, vol. 6, p. 80, 81.)

Mr. Wesley's opinion will be more clearly shewn, from his letters to Mrs. Crosby and Miss Bosanquet. Part of Miss B.'s letter, and part of his answer, are as follow :

Cross-Hall, near Leeds, 1771.

" Very dear and honoured Sir,

Various have been my hinderances in writing, but none sufficient to have kept me so long silent to you, had I not been at a loss on one particular subject. I want your advice and direction in an important point, and to know if you approve my light in it.

When we first settled at Layton-stone, sister Ryan and I began with little kind of prayer-meetings, &c., and they were productive of a blessing. Afterwards, on coming into Yorkshire, sister Crosby and I did the same—God was with us, and made it known by the effects in many places—but several object to them.

*1st Objection.* 2 Tim. ii, 12. "*Let the women learn in silence,*" &c. I understand that text to mean no more than that a woman shall not take authority over her husband, but be in subjection, neither shall she teach at all by usurping authority, she shall not meddle with church discipline, neither order, nor regulate any thing in which men are concerned in the matters of the church; but I do not apprehend it means she shall not intreat sinners to come to Jesus, nor say, "*Come, and I will tell you what God hath done for my soul.*"

*2nd Objection.* Nay, but the apostle says, 1 Cor. xiv. 34. "*Let your women keep silence,*" &c. I answer, was not that spoke in reference to a time of dispute and contention? So that his saying, "*they are not permitted to speak,*" here seems to me to imply no more than the other, she is not to meddle with church government?

*3rd Objection.* Nay, but it means literally not to speak by way of edification, while in the church, or company of promiscuous worshippers. Answer. Then

why is it said, 1 Cor. xi. 5. “*Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head.*” Can she prophecy without speaking? or ought she to speak, but not to edification.

*4th Objection.* She may now and then, if under a peculiar impulse, but never else. Answer. But how often is she to feel this impulse? Perhaps you will say, two or three times in her life. Perhaps God will say, two or three times in a week, or day; and where shall we find the rule for this?

*5th Objection.* But it is inconsistent with that *modesty* the Christian religion requires in *women* professing godliness. Answer. It may be, and is painful to it, but I do not see it inconsistent with it; and that for this reason, does not christian *modesty* stand in these two particulars—*purity* and *humility*? 1st, I apprehend it consists in cutting off every act, word, and thought, which in the least infringes on the *purity* God delights in.—2nd, In cutting off every act, word, and thought, which in the least infringes on *humility*; knowing thoroughly our own place, and tendering to every one their due; endeavouring to be little, and unknown, as far as the order of God will permit, and simply following that order, leaving the event to God. Now I do not apprehend *Mary* sinned against either of these heads, or could in the least be accused of *immodesty*, when she carried the joyful news of her LORD’s resurrection, and in that sense taught the *teachers* of mankind. Neither was the woman of Samaria to be accused of *immodesty*, when she invited the whole city to come to CHRIST. Neither do I think the woman mentioned in 2 Sam. xx, could be said to sin against *modesty*, though she called to the General of the opposite army to converse with her, and then went to all the people to give them her advice, and by it the city was saved. Neither do I suppose *Deborah* did wrong, in publicly declaring the message of the LORD and afterwards accompanying Barak to war, because his hands hung down at going without her.

*6th Objection.* But all these were extraordinary calls; sure you will not say, yours is an extraordinary

call? Answer. If I did not believe so, I would not act in an extraordinary manner.—I praise God, I feel him near, and I prove his faithfulness every day.

I am, &c.

M. B.”

MR. WESLEY'S ANSWER TO THE ABOVE.

Londonderry, June 13, 1771.

“My dear Sister,

I think the strength of the cause rests there, in your having an *extraordinary* call; so I am persuaded has every one of our Lay-preachers; otherwise I could not countenance his preaching at all. It is plain to me, that the work of God, termed Methodism, is an *extraordinary* dispensation of HIS providence. Therefore I do not wonder, if several things occur therein, which do not fall under the ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, “*I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation,*” yet in *extraordinary* cases, he made a few exceptions; at Corinth in particular.

I am, my dear Sister,

Your affectionate Brother,

J. WESLEY.”

The fruit which has followed women's preaching, if not a *positive*, it is at least, a *presumptive* proof, that those highly useful and laborious instruments, are called of God to publish salvation by Jesus Christ. And that there have been, and now are such instruments, I assert in the name and fear of God; and if required, can produce a cloud of signatures and witnesses to confirm it: and some of the seals to *Female Ministry* are now among the Methodist Itinerant Ministers, and very many more are acting as Local Preachers, and others as Class Leaders among us. And several are labouring in the word and doctrine among other denominations. The late pious and useful Mr. J. Cousins, was awakened by hearing

Miss Newman, afterwards his wife. Hence he would often pleasantly say, that he had married his mother. The usefulness of these women, not only in the conversion of souls, but in every other way which concerns the comfort and prosperity of the church, is in my judgment, incalculable. It was from this conviction, Mr. A. Mather writes to one of these female preachers: "*Your call is of God, I would have you go in at every opening door, but do not wait until the door is thrown wide open; go in if it be on the jar.*" Mr. Pawson writes: "*When (Mr. Wesley) saw that the Lord owned and blest the labours of Mrs. Crosby, Mrs. Fletcher, and the late Miss Horral, he was obliged to allow that the Lord is pleased to go out of his common way sometimes, for the good of his poor creatures, and therefore he would say nothing against women's preaching, in extraordinary cases. As to myself, I have long thought, that it is far more difficult to prove that women ought not to preach, than many imagine. Let any one seriously consider 1 Cor. xi. 5, 'Prophesieth with her head uncovered.' Now prophesying there has generally been understood of preaching. If then the women never did preach at all, why did the Lord, by the apostle, give these instructions respecting their heads being covered or uncovered?' &c. Mr. S. Bradburn says: 'For my own part, I durst not hinder a woman herein (from preaching) when I clearly discover nothing contrary to genuine piety—when I discover far greater abilities, then I do in very many travelling preachers—when thousands of good and wise people are for women's preaching; and when there is much good done by it wherever they go.'*"

I would finish by observing, if we condemn all women's preaching or prophesying to edification, exhortation, and comfort, in the church of Christ, we at once condemn that respectable body of

people called Quakers, who universally allow and approve of it; thus all those women who labour among them in word and doctrine, and who profess to be influenced by the Spirit of God, will be branded as hypocrites and impostors, having taken upon them an office that does not belong to them, and whose profession is a lie to the Holy Ghost. And by such conduct, we condemn those bodies of people that have broken off from us, and who universally allow of this practice; and with all the imperfections we discover among them, we must acknowledge that much good has been done, and that by the preaching of both men and women. By admitting the impropriety of women's preaching, &c., we condemn that most useful body of people called Methodists; both that part of them which allows women may be endowed with authority from on high to preach, as well as that part of them which totally denies all such authority, seeing the whole body of them allow and approve of women's speaking to edification and comfort. Witness their love-feasts, class and band meetings; they are all religious services; and I cannot see how we can allow the one, and reject the other.

Lastly, let all those daughters and handmaidens of the Lord, who think it their duty to pray, prophesy, or preach in his name, occupy the talent God has given them, to his glory. As long as you are sensible that your hearts are sincere, your intentions pure, your lives holy, that you have no other end in view than gaining proselytes to Jesus Christ; continue to follow the openings of providence, and the immediate teachings of his Spirit. If devils are cast out; souls saved; and the people willing to hear you; let no man stop you, without producing his authority from the King of Heaven; and giving you *good* and *sufficient* security that he will answer for your neglect of service in the church of Christ,

at the divine tribunal, in the day of awful and righteous retribution. Let the case of Miss Mallet be ever fresh in your memory. And if it should happen that the preachers, stewards, &c., are opposed to your prophesying or speaking unto the people by way of exhortation, *do not, I beseech you, hastily leave the connexion as some have done*; and above all, do not attempt to speak at those seasons, or in those places, where the regular preachers preach, but rather speak in some private house, to those who are willing to hear you, and at a time when there is no meeting held in the neighbourhood. From what has been advanced, I think it appears, (at least to me) that female preaching, (in some extraordinary cases, (and this is all I contend for) is both reasonable and lawful, consonant to Scripture, and the practice of primitive times; and I certainly think if any person could so far divest himself of any preconceived opinion on this subject, so as to weigh impartially in the balances of the sanctuary the scriptures cited in this pamphlet, would be led to decide in the same way; but I hope I am no bigot, all my differing brethren have an equal right to their opinion with myself. I conceived it my duty to publish this tract at *this time*, and I am satisfied with my motive. I have no sinister ends to serve, no party to please, no system that *must* be supported, because it has long been established by men; I trust I am endeavouring to follow *scriptural truth* wherever it may lead me. I know the conversion of sinners is the work of God—it is *his* to *begin, carry on*, and establish it. It is *his* to choose the instruments, and means of doing it. And all the glory must be ascribed to him. I commend the reader to God, and to the word of his grace, praying that both he and the writer may be led into all saving truth here, and at last brought into his eternal kingdom. Amen.